



4 Ways to Make Sex Feel Better Tonight

By Amy Levine, MA, CSE, Special to Everyday Health



S-E-X.

Three simple letters that elicit myriad thoughts and feelings. Sex has the potential to involve all of the senses, turn us on, happen solo or with a partner, allow us the opportunity to give and to receive, and be incredibly pleasurable. But for many people, sex isn't the connected and fulfilling experience we know is possible. Sometimes pain or discomfort is to blame. Other times it's sabotaged by common issues like body-bashing thoughts, anxiety, or stress. Often with subtle adjustments, sex can feel and be a lot better.

As a sex coach, I often play detective with my clients to figure out what they need to elevate their sexual experiences. Here are some of the solutions I share with them that I think will help you have a more pleasurable sex life too.

1. Sex Shouldn't Require Mind-Reading

Here's a four-letter word that will make sex better: T-A-L-K.

We can't expect our partners to read our minds. It's essential we know what we need, want, and desire. Communication is directly related to our pleasure potential.

Sexual Solution: Know your erogenous areas. If you're not sure what turns you on, make time for solo sessions to explore every inch of your skin. Feel the webbing of your fingers and toes, trace your finger down the outermost part of your ear, stroke your thighs, and then go for the obvious "feel good" areas. When you know what you like, tell your partner. Or show him or her what feels best by putting your hand over theirs, guiding them to the spot and showing them how to mimic the motions.

If you feel self-conscious, experience stress, anxiety, pain or discomfort, speak up as it arises during physical intimacy. Say something (like, "please stop I'm in pain, etc" or "let's slow down") or do what's needed (like, shift your body) to feel at ease in the moment. Then, so it doesn't create frustration, talk with your partner outside the bedroom at another time. Together come up with possible solutions or find an expert to help you navigate the situation.

2. Use the Right Lubricant

Dryness, like wetness, can come and go throughout a sexual encounter no matter how turned on you may be. Also, women rarely get the 20 minutes of foreplay (kissing, fooling around, or oral sex) needed to increase arousal and feel more connected. That said, there are many health conditions and circumstances that make it difficult to produce ample amounts of lubrication, if at all.

The most common culprits: hormonal shifts (including childbirth, breastfeeding, and menopause); allergies; anti-estrogen drugs and other medications and supplements; medical treatments (including radiation and chemotherapy); and surgical procedures (like removal of the ovaries).

Sexual Solution: Wetter can feel better. Add a lubricant during solo and partnered sex, whether it's for vulva or vaginal touch or penetration (start with a squirt of lube the size of a dime and increase the amount as needed. Use it on your vulva and vagina where you're being stimulated or on his penis).

There are three common types of lubricants — water-based, silicone-based, and oil-based. It's best to use liquid instead of a messy jelly consistency. When buying lube, select a vagina-friendly brand (without glycerin and chemicals you can't pronounce). Organic brands, like Yes, are a great option. If you're using latex condoms, avoid oil-based lubricants like baby oil, body lotion, or lubes. As a side note, don't use silicone-based lubes with silicone toys, as it causes the toys to deteriorate.

3. Get That Itching and Burning Checked Out

Itching and burning could be the sign of infection for both men and women, and it's best to go to your doc to find out what's behind it. If it coincides with sex, and you know it's not a recurring yeast, bacterial, or viral infection, it could be an allergy to latex or nonoxynol 9 (N-9), a spermicidal lubricant often found on condoms and used with a cervical cap or diaphragm. If vaginal dryness is the culprit, lube is a likely remedy.

Sexual Solution: Switch to a different type of condom. The other options are polyurethane, polyisoprene, and lambskin. A few things to keep in mind: Polyurethane and lambskin can be used with oil-based lube. And lambskin condoms only reduce the risk of pregnancy, not sexually transmitted diseases (if a partner is infected). If N-9 allergy seems to be an issue, find condoms that don't have spermicidal lubricant on them. And switch from a cervical cap or diaphragm to a different method of contraception.

4. Do Something Different

Sometimes it's a shift in position or being adventurous by trying something new that can instantly make sex more satisfying and exciting.

Sexual Solution: When you're in any sexual position, try shifting — up, down, right, or left — to elevate arousal or minimize musculoskeletal or myofascial discomfort and pain. For some situations — such as when, during doggy style, his penis is hitting your cervix and creating a cramping sensation — a shift can make a change in a split second. Propping problem areas under pillows can also make sex more comfortable.

Since most women don't climax from vaginal penetration alone, focus on the clitoris. After all, the sole purpose of this hot spot is for pleasure. Using a sex toy like the popular "bullet" shape — which easily slides between two people — boosts your arousal and increases your orgasmic ability. Or discover other erogenous areas like the g-spot, which can be detected once you're turned on.

For guys who have trouble maintaining an erection, a penis ring made of soft material can do the trick. And his prostate is likely his most sensitive spot if he let's you explore.

Fantasy, whether it's a thought of something sexy or erotic that's happened in the past or a mental movie of something you want to unfold, can fast-track desire and arousal from 0 to 60. And role-playing, whether you're pretending to be someone or somewhere else, can reinvigorate a sexual relationship. Especially if you're adding something fun like light bondage to your sack session, after being inspired by Fifty Shades of Grey on date night.

Amy Levine, MA, CSE, is a sex coach featured in magazines including Glamour, Health, and SELF. In her SPARK and IGNITE coaching sessions, Amy helps people solve their most intimate sexual dilemmas, inspiring them to become empowered in and out of bed. Get tips and learn more at igniteyourpleasure.com.